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SUBJECT: DARFUR - NRC RETURNS TO KALMA CAMP, SOUTH
DARFUR

REF: A) Khartoum 0824
B) Khartoum 0797

Summary

¶1. On May 31, 2006, the South Darfur State Security Committee approved an agreement to permit the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to resume camp coordination responsibilities at Kalma internally displaced persons (IDP) camp and food security programs in South Darfur for one year. NRC staff immediately returned to Nyala to meet with other actors and gain knowledge of current conditions inside and outside Kalma camp. Several other IDP camps in the Nyala vicinity lack camp coordinators and suffer from a lack of management. The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is exploring whether NRC may be assigned responsibilities for additional camps.

Background

¶2. Located approximately 11 kilometers east of Nyala, Kalma is Darfur's second largest IDP camp with a population of 90,000. NRC assumed Kalma camp coordination in July 2004 under a memorandum of understanding with OCHA and a letter of agreement with the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC). NRC's responsibilities at Kalma camp included coordinating humanitarian programs and protection for the camp's residents and serving as a liaison for community leaders, government officials, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and humanitarian agencies.

¶3. As reported per reftels, NRC has had a contentious relationship with the Sudanese Government of National Unity (GNU). On three separate occasions, NRC has been forced to withdraw from Kalma, with the longest period lasting three months from mid-August to November 2005.

¶4. Most recently, NRC withdrew from Kalma camp on April 4, 2006, after the GNU refused to renew NRC's letter of agreement. The GNU did not provide an official justification for not renewing NRC'S mandate. However,

many observers within the humanitarian community consider the decision a result of the GNU's disapproval of NRC's human rights advocacy, monitoring of sexual violence and abuse and humanitarian protection activities.

15. During NRC's two-month absence from Kalma, insecurity and tension rose among IDPs, the GNU, Arab nomads, humanitarian agencies, and AMIS officials. During this period, the breakdown of social cohesion culminated in the killing of a Sudanese AMIS interpreter during the visit by U.N. Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland on May 8, 2006.

Conditions Placed on NRC's return to Kalma

16. On May 31, 2006, the South Darfur State Security Committee approved an agreement allowing NRC to resume camp coordination of Kalma camp for one year. This agreement is similar to the 2004 memorandum with one very important distinction: NRC is not to occupy itself with "security issues" in the camp. The condition reflects the GNU view that NRC had impeded government control over security matters in the past. NRC has assured the humanitarian community that adherence to this provision will not hinder humanitarian protection activities.

Challenges Ahead

17. NRC faces several challenges in the resumption of camp coordination duties. NRC must balance the need to

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ensure the safety of IDPs and a secure setting for humanitarian work, while also working within the GNU-imposed limitations to abstain from active involvement in "security issues." NRC is encouraging Sheikhs and youth leaders to contribute positively to the environment of the camp. NRC is also prioritizing planning and camp infrastructure preparations for the rainy season, expected to start in the coming weeks.

18. Additionally, AMIS has developed a distrust of the Kalma camp community leaders, stemming from the killing of its interpreter. In response to the incident, AMIS suspended operations and established three preconditions for return: 1) Sheikhs commit to investigate the incident; 2) Sheikhs assist AMIS with the recovery of looted equipment; and 3) Sheikhs provide security guarantees that similar incidents will not reoccur. Thus far, the response from Kalma camp leaders has been unsatisfactory in addressing the AMIS preconditions for a return to the camp.

19. Currently, Kalma lacks a policing presence, as neither AMIS nor GNU forces are present in the camp. Residents remain at increased risk of abuse without AMIS oversight and monitoring. On behalf of Kalma IDPs, OCHA formally requested the AMIS Civilian Police Commissioner to resume firewood patrols at the camp, and the matter is pending in El Fasher.

STEINFELD